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A DOG OF FLANDERS

LOUISE DE LA RAMÉE

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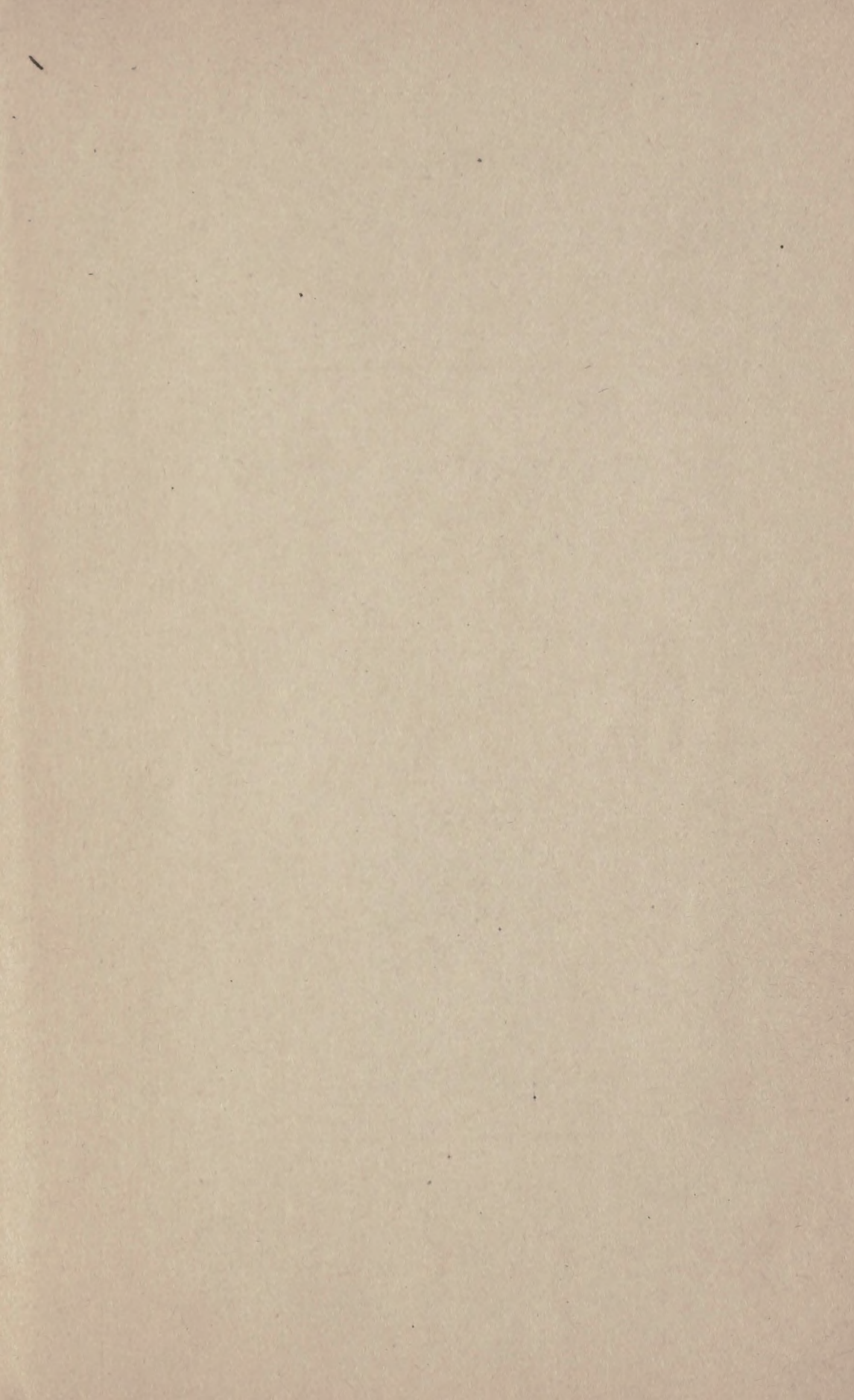


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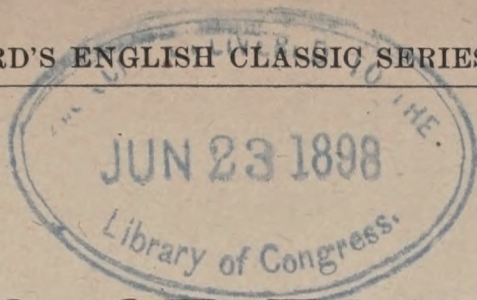
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23



A DOG OF FLANDERS

BY

LOUISE DE LA RAMÉE
(“ OUIDA ”)

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES



NEW YORK

MAYNARD, MERRILL, & CO.

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INTRODUCTION

OUIDA is the pseudonym of Louise de la Ramée, a widely read novelist of French-English extraction. She was born in England at Bury St. Edmunds, in 1840. When quite young she began to write for periodicals, using the nom-de-plume Ouida, her own childish mispronunciation of her name, Louisa. About 1861 her first novel, "Granville de Vigne" appeared first as a serial in *Colburn's New Monthly*, and later in book form under the title "Held in Bondage." More than a score of novels have since come from her pen.

Little is definitely known about Ouida's life. It is said in explanation of the abstruse learning and absurd ignorance displayed in her novels, that her education was desultory and erratic, being conducted by her father, a man of ability who had wasted his talents. For more than twenty years she has lived in a beautiful villa just out of Florence. She is a cynical, morbid woman, an intense hater of her own sex.

To Ouida's novels are well applied Ruskin's words about Doré's paintings—"Bad with an awful power." She has the natural gift of style, great descriptive talent, and, despite extravagances, skill in delineating character; but her picturesque power and her gorgeous rhetoric are often the handmaids of morbid sentiment and loose morality. She is a favorite with readers of sensational novels, but her pure and exquisite child-romances and short stories constitute her chief, if not only, claim to the notice of lovers of good literature. A *Westminster Review* critique says: "A wise maxim nobly expressed has been left us by Bacon,—'Non imperatur Naturæ nisi parendo.' The same may be said of Art. Toil and long suffering, keen self-examination and repression, intense study of the best models, and the experience that comes of them, all must be gone through before the goddess will reveal those mysteries to her votaries which will enable them to comprehend what Art is and is capable of, and what are its requirements. They cannot then sin against its rules—such would be impossible, for they are ingrained in their very natures. Now Ouida has artistic instincts undoubtedly, but she chafes at the severity

of the inexorable decree. She is impatient of the curb, and desires to command Nature as well as Art without obeying them. Had her vocation been to handle the brush, she would have been primarily a colorist. There are a good many points in which her works remind us of Rubens' paintings."

FAMOUS DOGS OF FICTION

PATRASCHE is one among the many famous dogs of fiction whose devotion has soothed the sad or brightened the glad hours of their masters. It may be interesting to note some of these.

First there is Ulysses' Argus, who, having waited weary years for his master's return, recognized Ulysses, whom his own family did not know, and died of joy at his coming. Chaucer's Prioress had dainty pets "smale hounds that she fedde with rosted flesh or milk or wastel bread." Nor must we forget the famous Spartan hounds of Theseus in Shakspeare's *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, and Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart in *King Lear*, who added another drop of bitterness to the King's brimming cup of sorrow by barking at their forgotten old master. Burns immortalized *Two Dogs*—Luath, the poor shepherd's collie, and Cæsar, the rich man's pet.

Across the pages of Sir Walter Scott, dear dog-lover that he was, passes a long procession of canines "of high and low degree." Lufra, "the fleetest hound in all the north," pulling down the king's stag; Fangs, comforting the outcast swineherd, Gurth; the dog with a Pantheon kind of name, which devoured Mr. Oldbuck's buttered toast; Wasp, attending his master, Bertram; Elphin, recognizing a long-absent master's voice; James FitzJames' "black hounds of pure Saint Hubert's breed"; Dandie Dinmont's terriers, Old Pepper and Old Mustard, Young Pepper and Young Mustard, and all their tribe: Scott brings all these, and more, vividly before us. But the most interesting of all his dogs is Bevis, of whom Scott's Maida was the original—Bevis the grand, tawny, lion-coated wolf-hound of noble old Sir Henry Lee.

We might extend indefinitely this list, which yet must not close without mention of Rab, the human-hearted mastiff hero of Dr. Brown's pathetic story, and of Wolf, the companion in hen-pecked misery of Rip Van Winkle.

A DOG OF FLANDERS

A STORY OF NOËL

I

NELLO and Patrasche were left all alone in the world.

They were friends in a friendship closer than brotherhood.

Nello was a little Ardennois—Patrasche was a big Fleming. They were both of the same age by length of years, yet one was still young, and the other was already old. They had dwelt together almost all their days: both were orphaned and destitute, and owed their lives to the same hand. It had been the beginning of the tie between them, their first bond of sympathy; and it had strengthened day by day, and had grown with their growth, firm and indissoluble, until they loved one another very greatly.

Their home was a little hut on the edge of a

2. Noël. Christmas.

7. Ardennois. An inhabitant of Ardennes, a frontier department of France.

8. Fleming. An inhabitant of Flanders.

little village—a Flemish village a league from Antwerp, set amidst flat breadths of pasture and cornlands, with long lines of poplars and of alders bending in the breeze on the edge of the great canal
5 which ran through it.

It had about a score of houses and homesteads, with shutters of bright green or sky-blue, and roofs rose-red or black and white, and walls whitewashed until they shone in the sun like snow. In the center of the village stood a windmill, placed on a little moss-grown slope: it was a landmark to all the level country round.

It had once been painted scarlet, sails and all, but that had been in its infancy, half a century or
15 more earlier, when it had ground wheat for the soldiers of Napoleon; and it was now a ruddy brown, tanned by wind and weather. It went queerly by fits and starts, as though rheumatic and stiff in the joints from age, but it served the whole
20 neighborhood, which would have thought it almost as impious to carry grain elsewhere as to attend any other religious service than the Mass that was performed at the altar of the little old gray church,

1. **League.** The length of the league varies greatly in different countries. The Dutch league is equivalent to about five English statute miles, but the distance here designated is probably about three miles.

16. **Soldiers of Napoleon.** Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), the great general and emperor of the French, declared war against Belgium and Great Britain in 1793, and the next year his victorious armies overran Belgium. It was under French rule until Napoleon's fall, when the royal family of Orange was recalled.

with its conical steeple, which stood opposite to it, and whose single bell rang morning, noon, and night with that strange, subdued, hollow sadness which every bell that hangs in the Low Countries seems to gain as an integral part of its melody. 5

Within sound of the little melancholy clock almost from their birth upward, they had dwelt together, Nello and Patrasche, in the little hut on the edge of the village, with the cathedral spire of Antwerp rising in the northeast, beyond the great green 10 plain of seeding grass and spreading corn that stretched away from them like a tideless, changeless sea.

It was the hut of a very old man, of a very poor man—of old Jehan Daas, who in his time had been 15 a soldier, and who remembered the wars that had trampled the country as oxen tread down the furrows, and who had brought from his service nothing except a wound, which had made him a cripple.

When old Jehan Daas had reached his full 20 eighty, his daughter had died in the Ardennes, hard by Stavelot, and had left him in legacy her two-year-old son. The old man could ill contrive to support himself, but he took the additional burden uncomplainingly, and it soon became welcome and 25 precious to him. Little Nello—which was but a

4. The Low Countries or Netherlands.

21. Hard by Stavelot. Near Stavelot, a town of Belgium.

pet diminutive for Nicolas—throve with him, and the old man and the little child lived in the poor little hut contentedly.

It was a very humble little mud-hut indeed, but
5 it was clean and white as a sea-shell, and stood in a small plot of garden ground that yielded beans and herbs and pumpkins.

They were very poor, terribly poor—many a day they had nothing at all to eat. They never by any
10 chance had enough: to have had enough to eat would have been to have reached paradise at once. But the old man was very gentle and good to the boy, and the boy was a beautiful, innocent, truthful, tender-natured creature; and they were happy
15 on a crust and a few leaves of cabbage, and asked no more of earth or heaven; save indeed that Patrasche should be always with them, since without Patrasche where would they have been?

For Patrasche was their alpha and omega; their
20 treasury and granary; their store of gold and wand of wealth; their bread-winner and minister; their only friend and comforter. Patrasche dead or gone from them, they must have laid themselves down and died likewise. Patrasche was body,
25 brains, hands, head, and feet to both of them: Patrasche was their very life, their very soul.

19. Alpha and Omega. The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet; the beginning and end; all.

For Jehan Daas was old and a cripple, and Nello was but a child; and Patrasche was their dog.

A dog of Flanders—yellow of hide, large of head and limb, with wolf-like ears that stood erect, and legs bowed and feet widened in the muscular development wrought in his breed by many generations of hard service. Patrasche came of a race which had toiled hard and cruelly from sire to son in Flanders many a century—slaves of slaves, dogs of the people, beasts of the shafts and the harness, 5 creatures that lived straining their sinews in the gall of the cart, and died breaking their hearts on the flints of the streets.

Patrasche had been born of parents who had labored hard all their days over the sharp-set stones 15 of the various cities and the long, shadowless, weary roads of the two Flanders and of Brabant. He had been born to no other heritage than those of pain and of toil. He had been fed on curses and baptized with blows. 20

Before he was fully grown he had known the bitter gall of the cart and the collar. Before he had entered his thirteenth month he had become the property of a hardware dealer, who was accustomed to wander over the land north and south, 25 from the blue sea to the green mountains. They

3. A dog of Flanders. In Belgium and other countries of Northern Europe dogs are used as beasts of draught and burden.

sold him for a small price, because he was so young.

His purchaser was a sullen, ill-living, brutal Brabantois, who heaped his cart full of pots and pans
5 and flagons and buckets, and other wares of crockery and brass and tin, and left Patrasche to draw the load as best he might, whilst he himself lounged idly by the side in fat and sluggish ease, smoking his black pipe and stopping at every wineshop or
10 café on the road.

Happily for Patrasche—or unhappily—he was very strong: he came of an iron race, long born and bred to such cruel travail; so that he did not die, but managed to drag on a wretched existence under
15 the brutal burdens, the scarifying lash, the hunger, the thirst, the blows, the curses, and the exhaustion which are the only wages which the Flemings pay the most patient and laborious of all their fourfooted victims.

20 One day, after two years of this long and deadly agony, Patrasche was going on as usual along one of the straight, dusty, unlovely roads that lead to the city of Rubens.

3. Brabantois. An inhabitant of Brabant, a province in the south of the Netherlands.

13. Travail. Severe toil.

15. Scarifying. Cutting, painful.

23. The city of Rubens. Antwerp. In the sixteenth century this great commercial city was a famous art center of the Flemish school. It was the birthplace of the artists Jordaens, Teniers, and Van Dyke, and the

It was full midsummer, and very warm. His cart was very heavy, piled high with goods in metal and in earthenware. His owner sauntered on without noticing him otherwise than by the crack of the whip as it curled round his quivering loins. 5

The Brabantois had paused to drink beer himself at every wayside house, but he had forbidden Patrasche to stop a moment for a draught from the canal. Going along thus, in the full sun, on a 10 scorching highway, having eaten nothing for twenty-four hours, and, which was far worse to him, not having tasted water for nearly twelve, being blind with dust, sore with blows and stupefied with the merciless weight which dragged upon his loins, 15 Patrasche, for once, staggered and foamed a little at the mouth, and fell.

He fell in the middle of the white, dusty road, in the full glare of the sun: he was sick unto death, and motionless. His master gave him the only 20 medicine in his pharmacy—kicks and oaths and blows with a cudgel of oak, which had been often the only food and drink, the only wage and reward, ever offered to him.

But Patrasche was beyond the reach of any 25 torture or of any curses. Patrasche lay, dead to all

appearances, down in the white powder of the summer dust.

After a while, finding it useless to assail his ribs with punishment and his ears with maledictions, 5 the Brabantois—deeming life gone in him, or going so nearly that his carcass was forever useless, unless indeed someone should strip it of the skin for gloves—cursed him fiercely in farewell, struck off the leathern bands of the harness, kicked his 10 body heavily aside into the grass, and, groaning and muttering in savage wrath, pushed the cart lazily along the road up hill, and left the dying dog there for the ants to sting and for the crows to pick.

It was a busy road that day, and hundreds of people, on foot and on mules, in wagons and in carts, 15 went by, tramping quickly and joyously on to Louvain. Some saw him, most did not even look: all passed on. A dead dog more or less—it was nothing in Brabant: it would be nothing anywhere in 20 the world.

After a time, amongst the holiday-makers, there came a little old man who was bent and lame, and very feeble. He was in no guise for feasting: he was very poorly and miserably clad, and he dragged 25 his silent way slowly through the dust amongst the pleasure-seekers.

He looked at Patrasche, paused, wondered,

turned aside, then kneeled down in the rank grass and weeds of the ditch, and surveyed the dog with kindly eyes of pity.

There was with him a little rosy, fair-haired, dark-eyed child of a few years old, who pattered in 5 amidst the bushes, that were for him breast-high, and stood gazing with a pretty seriousness upon the poor, great, quiet beast.

Thus it was that these two first met—the little Nello and the big Patrasche. 10

The upshot of the day was, that old Jehan Daas, with much laborious effort, drew the sufferer homeward to his own little hut, which was a stone's throw off amidst the fields, and there tended him with so much care that the sickness, which had 15 been a brain-seizure, brought on by heat and thirst and exhaustion, with time and shade and rest passed away, and health and strength returned, and Patrasche staggered up again upon his four stout, tawny legs. 20

Now for many weeks he had been useless, powerless, sore, near to death; but all this time he had heard no rough word, had felt no harsh touch, but only the pitying murmurs of the little child's voice and the soothing caress of the old man's hand. 25

In his sickness they too had grown to care for him, this lonely old man and the little happy child.

He had a corner of the hut, with a heap of dry

grass for his bed; and they had learned to listen eagerly for his breathing in the dark night, to tell them that he lived; and when he first was well enough to essay a loud, hollow, broken bay, they
5 laughed aloud, and almost wept together for joy at such a sign of his sure restoration; and little Nello, in his delighted glee, hung round his rugged neck with chains of marguerites, and kissed him with fresh and ruddy lips.

10 So then, when Patrasche arose, himself again, strong, big, gaunt, powerful, his great wistful eyes had a gentle astonishment in them that there were no curses to rouse him and no blows to drive him; and his heart awakened to a mighty love, which
15 never wavered once in its fidelity whilst life abode with him.

But Patrasche, being a dog, was grateful. Patrasche lay pondering long with grave, tender, musing brown eyes, watching the movements of his
20 friends.

Now, the old soldier, Jehan Daas, could do nothing for his living but limp about a little with a small cart, with which he carried daily the milk cans of those happier neighbors who owned cattle
25 away into the town of Antwerp.

The villagers gave him the employment a little out of charity—more because it suited them well

to send their milk into the town by so honest a carrier, and bide at home themselves to look after their gardens, their cows, their poultry, or their little fields. But it was becoming hard work for the old man. He was eighty-three, and Antwerp was 5 a good league off, or more.

Patrasche watched the milk-cans come and go that first day when he had got well, and was lying in the sun with the wreath of marguerites round his tawny neck. 10

The next morning, Patrasche, before the old man had touched the cart, arose and walked to it, and placed himself betwixt its handles, and testified, as plainly as dumb show could do, his desire and his ability to work in return for the bread of charity 15 that he had eaten. Jehan Daas resisted long, for the old man was one of those who thought it a foul shame to bind dogs to labor for which nature never formed them.

But Patrasche would not be gainsaid; finding 20 they did not harness him, he tried to draw the cart onward with his teeth.

At length Jehan Daas gave way, vanquished by the persistence and the gratitude of this creature whom he had succored. He fashioned his cart so 25 that Patrasche could run in it, and this he did every morning of his life thenceforward.

When the winter came, Jehan Daas thanked the

blessed fortune that had brought him to the dying dog in the ditch that fair-day of Louvain; for he was very old, and he grew feebler with each year, and he would ill have known how to pull his load of 5 milk-cans over the snows and through the deep ruts in the mud if it had not been for the strength and the industry of the animal he had befriended.

As for Patrasche, it seemed heaven to him.

After the frightful burdens that his old master 10 had compelled him to strain under, at the call of the whip at every step, it seemed nothing to him but amusement to step out with this little light green cart, with its bright brass cans, by the side of the gentle old man who always paid him with a 15 tender caress and with a kindly word. Besides, his work was over by three or four in the day, and after that time he was free to do as he would—to stretch himself, to sleep in the sun, to wander in the fields, to romp with the young child, or to play with his 20 fellow-dogs. Patrasche was very happy.

Fortunately for his peace, his former owner was killed in a drunken brawl at the kermesse of Mechlin, and so sought not after him nor disturbed him in his new and well-loved home.

25 A few years later, old Jehan Daas, who had always been a cripple, became so paralyzed with

23. Mechlin. A city of Belgium so famous for its laces that during the seventeenth century it was known as "the city of laces."

rheumatism that it was impossible for him to go out with the cart any more.

Then little Nello, being now grown to his sixth year of age, and knowing the town well from having accompanied his grandfather so many times, 5 took his place beside the cart, and sold the milk and received the coins in exchange, and brought them back to their respective owners with a pretty grace and seriousness which charmed all who beheld him.

The little Ardennois was a beautiful child, with 10 dark, grave, tender eyes, and a lovely bloom upon his face, and fair locks that clustered to his throat; and many an artist sketched the group as they went by him—the green cart with the brass flagons of milk, and the great, tawny-colored, massive dog, 15 with his belled harness, that chimed cheerily as he went, and the small figure that ran beside him, which had little white feet in great wooden shoes, and a soft, grave, innocent, happy face like the little fair children of Rubens. 20

Nello and Patrasche did the work so well and so joyfully together that Jehan Daas himself, when the summer came and he was better again, had no need to stir out, but could sit in the doorway in the sun, and see them go forth through the garden 25 wicket, and then doze, and dream, and pray a little,

18. **Wooden shoes.** These are worn by peasants in France, the Netherlands, and other parts of Europe.

and then awake again as the clock tolled three, and watch for their return. And on their return Patrasche would shake himself free of his harness with a bay of glee, and Nello would recount with
5 pride the doings of the day; and they would all go in together to their meal of rye bread and milk or soup, and would see the shadows lengthen over the plain, and see the twilight veil the fair cathedral spire; and then lie down together to sleep peace-
10 fully while the old man said a prayer.

So the days and the years went on, and the lives of Nello and Patrasche were happy, innocent, and healthful.

II

IN the spring and summer especially were they
15 glad. Flanders is not a lovely land, and around the burgh of Rubens it is perhaps least lovely of all.

Anyway, there is a greenery and breadth of space enough to be as good as beauty to a child and
20 a dog; and these two asked no better, when their work was done, than to lie buried in the lush grasses on the side of the canal, and watch the cum- brous vessels drifting by, and bringing the crisp salt smell of the sea amongst the blossoming scents of
25 the country summer.

In winter the winds found many holes in the walls of the poor little hut, and the vine was black and leafless, and the bare lands looked very bleak and drear without, and sometimes within the floor was flooded and then frozen. In winter it was 5 hard, and the snow numbed the little white limbs of Nello, and the icicles cut the brave, untiring feet of Patrasche.

But even then they were never heard to lament, either of them. The child's wooden shoes and the 10 dog's four legs would trot manfully together over the frozen fields to the chime of the bells on the harness; and then sometimes, in the streets of Antwerp, some housewife would bring them a bowl of soup and a handful of bread, or some kindly trader 15 would throw some billets of fuel into the little cart as it went homeward, or some woman in their own village would bid them keep some share of the milk they carried for their own food; and then they would run over the white lands, through the early 20 darkness, bright and happy, and burst with a shout of joy into their home.

So, on the whole, it was well with them, very well; and Patrasche, meeting on the highway or in the public streets the many dogs who toiled from 25 daybreak into nightfall, paid only with blows and curses, and loosened from the shafts with a kick to starve and freeze as best they might,—Patrasche in

his heart was very grateful to his fate, and thought it the fairest and the kindest the world could hold. Though he was often very hungry indeed when he lay down at night; though he had to work in the
5 heats of summer noons and the rasping chills of winter dawns; though his feet were often tender with wounds from the sharp edges of the jagged pavement; though he had to perform tasks beyond his strength and against his nature,—yet he was
10 grateful and content: he did his duty with each day, and the eyes that he loved smiled down on him. It was sufficient for Patrasche.

There was only one thing which caused Patrasche any uneasiness in his life, and it was this.
15 Antwerp, as all the world knows, is full at every turn of old piles of stones, dark and ancient and majestic, standing in crooked courts, jammed against gateways and taverns, rising by the water's edge, with bells ringing above them in the air, and
20 ever and again out of their arched doors a swell of music pealing.

Now, the trouble of Patrasche was this.

Into these great sad piles of stones, that reared their melancholy majesty above the crowded roofs,
25 the child Nello would many and many a time enter, and disappear through their dark, arched portals, whilst Patrasche, left without upon the pavement, would wearily and vainly ponder on what could be

the charm which thus allured from him his inseparable and beloved companion.

Once or twice he did essay to see for himself, clattering up the steps with his milk-cart behind him; but thereon he had been always sent back 5 again summarily by a tall custodian in black clothes and silver chains of office; and fearful of bringing his little master into trouble, he desisted, and remained couched patiently before the churches until such time as the boy reappeared. 10

It was not the fact of his going into them which disturbed Patrasche: he knew that people went to church: all the village went to the small, tumble-down, gray pile opposite the red windmill. What troubled him was that little Nello always looked 15 strangely when he came out, always very flushed or very pale; and whenever he returned home after such visitations would sit silent and dreaming, not caring to play, but gazing out at the evening skies beyond the line of the canal, very subdued and 20 almost sad.

What was it? wondered Patrasche.

He thought it could not be good or natural for the little lad to be so grave, and, in his dumb fashion, he tried all he could to keep Nello by him 25 in the sunny fields or in the busy market-place.

But to the churches Nello would not go: most often of all would he go to the great cathedral; and

Patrasche, left without on the stones by the iron fragments of Quentin Matsys' gate, would stretch himself and yawn and sigh, and even howl now and then, all in vain, until the doors closed and the child
5 perforce came forth again, and winding his arms about the dog's neck, would kiss him on his broad, tawny-colored forehead, and murmur always the same words:

“If I could only see them, Patrasche!—if I
10 could only see them!”

What were they? pondered Patrasche, looking up with large, wistful, sympathetic eyes.

One day, when the custodian was out of the way and the doors left ajar, he got in for a moment after
15 his little friend and saw. “They” were two great covered pictures on either side of the choir.

Nello was kneeling, wrapt as in an ecstasy, before the altar-picture of the Assumption, and when he noticed Patrasche, and rose and drew the dog
20 gently out into the air, his face was wet with tears, and he looked up at the veiled places as he passed them, and murmured to his companion:

“It is so terrible not to see them, Patrasche, just

2. *Quentin Matsys.* There is a legend that Quentin Matsys or Massys (1460–1530) a Flemish artist, was a blacksmith until love for an artist's daughter led him to make painting his profession.

5. *Perforce.* Of necessity.

15. *They, etc.* Rubens' masterpieces, “The Descent from the Cross” and “The Elevation of the Cross,” hang in the transept of the Antwerp Cathedral, one on each side of the choir.

because one is poor and cannot pay! He never meant that the poor should not see them when he painted them, I am sure. He would have had us see them any day,—every day: that I am sure. And they keep them shrouded there,—shrouded in 5 the dark, the beautiful things!—and they never feel the light, and no eyes to look on them, unless rich people come and pay. If I could only see them, I would be content to die.”

But he could not see them, and Patrasche could 10 not help him, for to gain the silver piece that the Church exacts as the price for looking on the glories of the “Elevation of the Cross” and the “Descent from the Cross” was a thing as utterly beyond the powers of either of them as it would have been 15 to scale the heights of the cathedral spire.

They had never so much as a sou to spare: if they cleared enough to get a little wood for the stove, a little broth for the pot, it was the utmost they could do. And yet the heart of the child was 20 set in sore and endless longing upon beholding the greatness of the two veiled Rubens.

The whole soul of the little Ardennois thrilled and stirred with an absorbing passion for art.

Going on his ways through the old city in the 25 early daybreak before the sun or the people had

17. Sou. An old French copper coin worth about one cent.

22. Rubens. Paintings by Rubens.

seen them, Nello, who looked only a little peasant boy, with a great dog drawing milk to sell from door to door, was in a heaven of dreams, whereof Rubens was the god. Nello, cold and hungry, 5 with stockingless feet in wooden shoes, and the winter winds blowing amongst his curls and lifting his poor thin garments, was in a rapture of meditation, wherein all that he saw was the beautiful fair face of the Mary of "The Assumption," with the 10 waves of her golden hair lying upon her shoulders, and the light of an eternal sun shining down upon her brow. Nello, reared in poverty and buffeted by fortune, and untaught in letters, and unheeded by men, had the compensation or the curse which 15 is called Genius.

No one knew it. He as little as any. No one knew it.

Only indeed Patrasche, who being with him always, saw him draw with chalk upon the stones any 20 and every thing that grew or breathed,—heard him on his little bed of hay, murmur all manner of timid, pathetic prayers to the spirit of the great Master; watched his gaze darken and his face radiate at the evening glow of sunset or the rosy rising 25 of the dawn; and felt, many and many a time, the tears of a strange, nameless pain and joy mingled together, fall hotly from the bright young eyes upon his own wrinkled, yellow forehead.

“I should go to my grave quite content if I thought, Nello, that when thou growest a man thou couldst own this hut and the little plot of ground, and labor for thyself, and be called Baas by thy neighbors,” said the old man Jehan many an hour 5 from his bed.

For to own a bit of soil, and to be called Baas—master—by the hamlet round, is to have achieved the highest ideal of a Flemish peasant; and the old soldier, who had wandered over all the earth in his 10 youth, and had brought nothing back, deemed in his old age that to live and die on one spot in contented humility was the fairest fate he could desire for his darling.

Nello dreamed of other things in the future than 15 of tilling the little rood of earth, and living under the wattle roof, and being called Baas by neighbors a little poorer or a little less poor than himself. The cathedral spire, where it rose beyond the fields in the ruddy evening skies or in the dim, gray, 20 misty mornings, said other things to him than this. But these he told only to Patrasche, whispering, childlike, his fancies in the dog’s ear when they went together at their work through the fogs of the daybreak, or lay together at their rest 25 amongst the rustling rushes by the water’s side.

16. Rood. One-fourth of an acre.

17. Wattle. Made of twigs.

For such dreams are not easily shaped into speech to awake the slow sympathies of human auditors; and they would only have sorely perplexed and troubled the poor old man, bedridden
5 in his corner, who, for his part, whenever he had trodden the streets of Antwerp, had thought the daub of blue and red that they called a Madonna, on the walls of the wine-shop where he drank his sou's worth of black beer, quite as good as any of
10 the famous altarpieces for which the stranger-folk traveled far and wide into Flanders from every land on which the good sun shone.

There was only one other besides Patrasche to whom Nello could talk at all of his daring fantasies.
15 This other was little Alois, who lived at the old red mill on the grassy mound, and whose father, the miller, was the best-to-do husbandman in all the village.

Little Alois was only a pretty baby, with soft,
20 round, rosy features, made lovely by those sweet dark eyes that the Spanish rule has left in so many a Flemish face, in testimony of the Alvan domin-

7. Madonna. (*It.*, *Ma Donna*, my lady.) A picture of the Virgin Mary.

21. Spanish rule. The Netherlands, having become a part of the duchy of Burgundy, was inherited by Charles V. of Spain. Philip II.'s despotic rule drove the country to a rebellion which, after eighty years, resulted in the establishment of independence.

22. The Alvan dominion. The Duke of Alba or Alva (1508-82) was prime minister and general of the Spanish armies under Charles V. and Philip II. Sent by Philip to quell the insurrection in the Netherlands, he waged ruthless war there from 1567 to 1573.

ion, as Spanish art has left, broadsown throughout the country, majestic palaces and stately courts, gilded house fronts and sculptured lintels—histories in blazonry and poems in stone.

Little Alois was often with Nello and Patrasche. 5 They played in the fields, they ran in the snow, they gathered the daisies and bilberries, they went up to the old gray church together, and they often sat together by the broad wood-fire in the mill-house. 10

Little Alois, indeed, was the richest child in the hamlet. She had neither brother nor sister; her blue serge dress had never a hole in it; at kermesse she had as many gilded nuts and Agni Dei in sugar as her hands could hold; and when she went up for 15 her first communion, her flaxen curls were covered with a cap of richest Mechlin lace, which had been her mother's and her grandmother's before it came to her. Men spoke already, though she had but twelve years, of the good wife she would be for 20 their sons to woo and win; but she herself was a little, gay, simple child, in nowise conscious of her heritage, and she loved no playfellows so well as Jehan Daas' grandson, and his dog.

One day her father, Baas Cogeze, a good man, 25

14. Agni Dei. An Agnus Dei is a figure of a lamb bearing a cross or flag.

22. Nowise conscious of her heritage. Not realizing her importance as heiress.

but somewhat stern, came on a pretty group in the long meadow behind the mill, where the aftermath had that day been cut.

It was his little daughter sitting amidst the hay, 5 with the great tawny head of Patrasche on her lap, and many wreaths of poppies and blue cornflowers round them both: on a clean smooth slab of pine wood the boy Nello drew their likeness with a stick of charcoal.

10 The miller stood and looked at the portrait with tears in his eyes, it was so strangely like, and he loved his only child closely and well. Then he roughly chid the little girl for idling there whilst her mother needed her within, and sent her in- 15 doors crying and afraid: then, turning, he snatched the wood from Nello's hands.

"Dost do much of such folly?" he asked, but there was a tremble in his voice.

Nello colored and hung his head. "I draw 20 everything I see," he murmured.

The miller was silent: then he stretched his hand out with a franc in it.

"It is folly, as I say, and evil waste of time: nevertheless, it is like Alois, and will please the 25 house-mother. Take this silver bit for it and leave it for me."

2. **Aftermath.** The second crop of grass or hay.

22. **Franc.** A French silver coin worth about nineteen cents.

The color died out of the face of the young Ardennois: he lifted his head and put his hands behind his back.

“Keep your money and the portrait both, Baas Cogez,” he said simply. “You have been often 5 good to me.”

Then he called Patrasche to him, and walked away across the fields.

“I could have seen *them* with that franc,” he murmured to Patrasche, “but I could not sell her 10 picture—not even for them.”

Baas Cogez went into his mill-house sore troubled in his mind.

“That lad must not be so much with Alois,” he said to his wife that night. “Trouble may come 15 of it hereafter: he is fifteen now, and she is twelve; and the boy is comely of face and form.”

“And he is a good lad and a loyal,” said the housewife, feasting her eyes on the piece of pine wood where it was throned above the chimney 20 with a cuckoo clock in oak and a Calvary in wax.

“Yea, I do not gainsay that,” said the miller, draining his pewter flagon.

“Then if what you think of were to come to 25 pass,” said the wife hesitatingly, “would it mat-

21. A Calvary. A representation of the Crucifixion.

23. Yea, I do not gainsay that. Yes, I do not deny that.

ter so much? She will have enough for both, and one cannot be better than happy."

"You are a woman, and therefore a fool," said the miller harshly, striking his pipe on the table.
5 "The lad is nought but a beggar, and, with these painter's fancies, worse than a beggar. Have a care that they are not together in the future, or I will send the child to the surer keeping of the nuns of the Sacred Heart."

10 The poor mother was terrified, and promised humbly to do his will. Not that she could bring herself altogether to separate the child from her favorite playmate, nor did the miller even desire that extreme cruelty to a young lad who was guilty
15 of nothing except poverty. But there were many ways in which little Alois was kept away from her chosen companion; and Nello, being a boy, proud and quiet and sensitive, was quickly wounded, and ceased to turn his own steps and those of Patrasche,
20 as he had been used to do with every moment of leisure, to the old red mill upon the slope.

What his offense was he did not know: he supposed he had in some manner angered Baas Cogeze by taking the portrait of Alois in the meadow; and
25 when the child who loved him would run to him and nestle her hand in his, he would smile at her

9. The Sacred Heart. An order of nuns whose main object is the education of girls of well-to-do parentage.

very sadly, and say with a tender concern for her before himself:

“Nay, Alois, do not anger your father. He thinks that I make you idle, dear, and he is not pleased that you should be with me. He is a good 5 man and loves you well: we will not anger him, Alois.”

But it was with a sad heart that he said it, and the earth did not look so bright to him as it had used to do when he went out at sunrise under the 10 poplars down the straight roads with Patrasche.

The old red mill had been a landmark to him, and he had been used to pause by it, going and coming, for a cheery greeting with its people as her little flaxen head rose above the low mill-wicket, 15 and her little rosy hands had held out a bone or a crust to Patrasche.

Now the dog looked wistfully at a closed door, and the boy went on without pausing, with a pang at his heart, and the child sat within with tears 20 dropping slowly on the knitting to which she was set on her little stool by the stove; and Baas Cogeze, working among his sacks and his mill gear, would harden his will, and say to himself, “It is best so. The lad is all but a beggar, and full of idle, dream- 25 ing fooleries. Who knows what mischief might not come of it in the future?”

So he was wise in his generation, and would not

have the door unbarred, except upon rare and formal occasions, which seemed to have neither warmth nor mirth in them to the two children, who had been accustomed so long to a daily, gleeful,
5 careless, happy interchange of greeting, speech, and pastime, with no other watcher of their sports or auditor of their fancies than Patrasche, sagely shaking the brazen bells of his collar and responding with all a dog's swift sympathies to their every
10 change of mood.

All this while the little panel of pine wood remained over the chimney in the mill kitchen with the cuckoo clock and the waxen Calvary, and sometimes it seemed to Nello a little hard that whilst his
15 gift was accepted he himself should be denied.

But he did not complain: it was his habit to be quiet: old Jehan Daas had said ever to him, "We are poor: we must take what God sends—the ill with the good: the poor cannot choose."

20 To which the boy had always listened in silence, being reverent of his old grandfather; but nevertheless a certain vague and sweet hope, such as beguiles the children of genius, had whispered in his heart, "Yet the poor do choose sometimes—choose
25 to be great, so that men cannot say them nay."

And he thought so still in his innocence; and one day, when the little Alois, finding him by chance alone amongst the cornfields by the canal,

ran to him and held him close, and sobbed piteously because the morrow would be her saint's day, and for the first time in all her life her parents had failed to bid him to the little supper and romp in the great barns with which her feast-day was 5 always celebrated, Nello had kissed her, and murmured to her in firm faith:

"It shall be different one day, Alois. One day that little bit of pine wood that your father has of mine shall be worth its weight in silver; and he will 10 not shut the door against me then. Only love me always, dear little Alois; only love me always, and I will be great."

"And if I do not love you?" the pretty child asked, pouting a little through her tears, and moved 15 by the instinctive coquetries of her sex.

Nello's eyes left her face and wandered to the distance, where in the red and gold of the Flemish night the cathedral spire rose.

There was a smile on his face so sweet and yet so 20 sad that little Alois was awed by it.

"I will be great still," he said under his breath—"great still, or die, Alois."

"You do not love me, then!" said the little spoilt child, pushing him away; but the boy shook 25 his head and smiled, and went on his way through

2. Her saint's day. The festival of the saint after whom she was named,

the tall yellow corn, seeing as in a vision some day in a fair future when he should come into that old familiar land and ask Alois of her people, and be not refused nor denied, but received in honor, 5 whilst the village folk should throng to look upon him, and say in one another's ears, "Dost see him? He is a king among men, for he is a great artist and the world speaks his name; and yet he was only our poor little Nello, who was a beggar, as one 10 may say, and only got his bread by the help of his dog."

And he thought how he would fold his grandsire in furs and purples, and portray him as the old man is portrayed in the Family in the chapel 15 of St. Jacques; and of how he would hang the throat of Patrasche with a collar of gold, and place him on his right hand, and say to the people, "This was once my only friend"; and of how he would build himself a great white marble palace, and 20 make to himself luxuriant gardens of pleasure, on the slope looking outward to where the cathedral-spire rose, and not dwell in it himself, but summon to it, as to a home, all men young and poor and friendless, but of the will to do mighty things; and 25 of how he would say to them always, if they sought

12. Fold his grandsire in furs and purple. Dress his grandfather magnificently.

13. The old man, etc. Rubens' father in the family picture in his memorial chapel.

to bless his name, "Nay, do not thank me—thank Rubens. Without him, what should I have been?"

These dreams, beautiful, impossible, innocent, free of all selfishness, full of heroical worship, were so closely about him as he went that he was happy 5 —happy even on this sad anniversary of Alois' saint's day, when he and Patrasche went home by themselves to the little dark hut and the meal of black bread, whilst in the mill-house all the children of the village sang and laughed, and ate the 10 big round cakes of Dijon and the almond gingerbread of Brabant, and danced in the great barn to the light of the stars and the music of flute and fiddle.

"Never mind, Patrasche," he said, with his arms 15 round the dog's neck as they both sat in the door of the hut, where the sounds of the mirth at the mill came down to them on the night air—"never mind. It shall all be changed by and by."

He believed in the future: Patrasche, of more 20 experience and of more philosophy, thought that the loss of the mill supper in the present was ill compensated by dreams of milk and honey in some vague hereafter.

And Patrasche growled whenever he passed by 25 Baas Coge.

9. Black bread. Rye bread.

23. Milk and honey. Bountiful fare.

III

"THIS is Alois's name-day, is it not?" said the old man Daas that night from the corner where he was stretched upon his bed of sacking.

The boy gave a gesture of assent: he wished that 5 the old man's memory had erred a little, instead of keeping such exact account.

"And why not there?" his grandfather pursued.
"Thou hast never missed a year before, Nello."

"Thou art too sick to leave," murmured the lad,
10 bending his handsome young head over the bed.

"Tut! tut! Mother Nulette would have come and sat with me, as she does scores of times. What is the cause, Nello?" the old man persisted.

"Thou surely hast not had ill words with the little
15 one?"

"Nay, grandfather—never," said the boy quickly, with a hot color in his bent face.

"Simply and truly, Baas Cogez did not have me asked this year. He has taken some whim against
20 me."

"But thou hast done nothing wrong?"

"That I know—nothing. I took the portrait of Alois on a piece of pine: that is all."

"Ah!"

25 The old man was silent: the truth suggested

itself to him with the boy's innocent answer. He was tied to a bed of dried leaves in the corner of a wattle hut, but he had not wholly forgotten what the ways of the world were like.

He drew Nello's fair head fondly to his breast 5 with a tenderer gesture.

"Thou art very poor, my child," he said, with a quiver the more in his aged trembling voice—"so poor! It is very hard for thee."

"Nay, I am rich," murmured Nello; and in his 10 innocence he thought so—rich with the imperishable powers that are mightier than the might of kings. And he went and stood by the door of the hut in the quiet autumn night, and watched the stars troop by and the tall poplars bend and shiver 15 in the wind.

All the casements of the mill-house were lighted, and every now and then the notes of the flute came to him. The tears fell down his cheeks, for he was but a child, yet he smiled, for he said to him- 20 self, "In the future!"

He stayed there until all was quite still and dark, then he and Patrasche went within and slept together, long and deeply, side by side.

Now he had a secret which only Patrasche knew. 25 There was a little outhouse to the hut, which no one entered but himself—a dreary place, but with abundant clear light from the north. Here he had

fashioned himself rudely an easel in rough lumber, and here on a great gray sea of stretched paper he had given shape to one of the innumerable fancies which possessed his brain.

5 No one had ever taught him anything; colors he had no means to buy; he had gone without bread many a time to procure even the few rude vehicles that he had here; and it was only in black and white that he could fashion the things he saw.
10 This great figure which he had drawn here in chalk was only an old man sitting on a fallen tree—only that. He had seen old Michel the woodman sitting so at evening many a time.

He had never had a soul to tell him of outline
15 or perspective, of anatomy or of shadow, and yet he had given all the weary, worn-out age, all the sad, quiet patience, all the rugged, careworn pathos of his original, and given them so that the old lonely figure was a poem, sitting there, meditative
20 and alone, on the dead tree, with the darkness of the descending night behind him.

It was rude, of course, in a way, and had many faults, no doubt; and yet it was real, true in Nature, true in Art, and very mournful, and in a
25 manner beautiful.

Patrasche had lain quiet countless hours watching its gradual creation after the labor of each day

was done, and he knew that Nello had a hope—vain and wild perhaps, but strongly cherished—of sending this great drawing to compete for a prize of two hundred francs a year, which it was announced in Antwerp would be open to every lad of 5 talent, scholar or peasant, under eighteen, who would attempt to win it with some unaided work of chalk or pencil. Three of the foremost artists in the town of Rubens were to be the judges and elect the victor according to his merits. 10

All the spring and summer and autumn Nello had been at work upon this treasure, which, if triumphant, would build him his first step toward independence, and the mysteries of the art which he blindly, ignorantly, and yet passionately adored. 15

He said nothing to anyone: his grandfather would not have understood, and little Alois was lost to him. Only to Patrasche he told all, and whispered, “Rubens would give it me, I think, if he knew.” 20

Patrasche thought so too, for he knew that Rubens had loved dogs or he had never painted them with such exquisite fidelity; and men who loved dogs were, as Patrasche knew, always pitiful.

21. Rubens had loved dogs. Rubens is especially renowned for his paintings of children and animals. He was a man kind-hearted and pitiful. His doors were always open to those who needed help or advice, and it seemed to give him real pleasure to acknowledge the merits of a brother artist!

The drawings were to go in on the first day of December, and the decision be given on the twenty-fourth, so that he who should win might rejoice with all his people at the Christmas season.

5 In the twilight of a bitter wintry day, and with a beating heart, now quick with hope, now faint with fear, Nello placed the great picture on his little green milk cart, and took it, with the help of Patrasche, into the town, and there left it, as enjoined,
10 at the doors of a public building.

“Perhaps it is worth nothing at all. How can I tell?” he thought, with the heartsickness of a great timidity.

Now that he had left it there, it seemed to him
15 so hazardous, so vain, so foolish, to dream that he, a little lad with bare feet, who barely knew his letters, could do anything at which great painters, real artists, could ever deign to look.

Yet he took heart as he went by the cathedral:
20 the lordly form of Rubens seemed to rise from the fog and the darkness, and to loom in its magnificence before him, whilst the lips, with their kindly smile, seemed to him to murmur, “Nay, have courage! It was not by a weak heart and by faint
25 fears that I wrote my name for all time upon Antwerp.”

Nello ran home through the cold night, comforted.

He had done his best: the rest must be as God willed, he thought, in that innocent, unquestioning faith which had been taught him in the little chapel amongst the willows and the poplar trees.

The winter was very sharp already. That night, 5 after they reached the hut, snow fell; and fell for very many days after that, so that the paths and the divisions in the fields were all obliterated, and all the smaller streams were frozen over, and the cold was intense upon the plains. Then, indeed, it be- 10 came hard work to go round for the milk, while the world was all dark, and carry it through the darkness to the silent town.

Hard work, especially for Patrasche, for the passage of the years, that were only bringing Nello a 15 stronger youth, were bringing him old age, and his joints were stiff, and his bones ached often. But he would never give up his share of the labor. Nello would fain have spared him, and drawn the cart himself, but Patrasche would never allow it. 20 All he would ever permit or accept was the help of a thrust from behind to the truck as it lumbered along through the ice ruts. Patrasche had lived in harness, and he was proud of it. He suffered a great deal sometimes from frost, and the ter- 25 rible roads, and the rheumatic pains of his limbs, but he only drew his breath hard and bent his proud neck, and trod onward with steady patience.

“Rest thee at home, Patrasche—it is time thou didst rest—and I can quite well push in the cart by myself,” urged Nello many a morning; but Patrasche, who understood him aright, would no more
5 have consented to stay at home than a veteran soldier to shirk when the charge was sounding; and every day he would rise and place himself in the shafts, and plod along over the snow, through the fields that his four round feet had left their print
10 upon so many, many years.

“One must never rest till one dies,” thought Patrasche; and sometimes it seemed to him that that time of rest for him was not very far off. His sight was less clear than it had been, and it gave
15 him pain to rise after the night’s sleep, though he would never lie a moment in his straw when once the bell of the chapel, tolling five, let him know that the daybreak labor had begun.

“My poor Patrasche, we shall soon lie quiet together, you and I,” said old Jehan Daas, stretching out to stroke the head of Patrasche with the old withered hand which had always shared with him its one poor crust of bread; and the hearts of the old man and the old dog ached together with one
25 thought: When they were gone who would care for their darling?

One afternoon, as they came back from Antwerp, over the snow, which had become hard and

smooth as marble over all the Flemish plains, they found dropped in the road a pretty little puppet—a tamborine player, all scarlet and gold, about six inches high, and, unlike greater personages when Fortune lets them drop, quite unspoiled and unhurt 5 by his fall. It was a pretty toy. Nello tried to find its owner, and, failing, thought that it was just the thing to please Alois.

It was quite night when he passed the mill-house: he knew the little window of her room. It could 10 be no harm, he thought, if he gave her his little piece of treasure-trove, they had been playfellows so long.

There was a shed with a sloping roof beneath her casement: he climbed and tapped softly at the lat- 15 tice: there was a little light within.

The child opened it and looked out, half frightened.

Nello put the tambourine player into her hands.

“Here is a doll I found in the snow, Alois. 20 Take it,” he whispered—“take it, and God bless thee, dear!”

He slid down from the shed roof before she had time to thank him, and ran off through the darkness. 25

That night there was a fire at the mill. Out-

2. Puppet. Doll.

12. Treasure-trove. Treasure found whose owner is undiscovered.

buildings and much corn were destroyed, although the mill itself and the dwelling house were unharmed. All the village was out in terror, and the engines came tearing through the snow from Antwerp. The miller was insured, and would lose nothing: nevertheless, he was in furious wrath, and declared aloud that the fire was due to no accident, but to some foul intent.

Nello, awakened from his sleep, ran to help with the rest; Baas Cogeze thrust him angrily aside.

“Thou wert loitering here after dark,” he said roughly. “I believe, on my soul, thou dost know more of the fire than anyone.”

Nello heard him in silence, stupefied, not supposing that anyone could say such things except in jest, and not comprehending how anyone could pass a jest at such a time.

Nevertheless, the miller said the brutal thing openly to many of his neighbors in the day that followed; and though no serious charge was ever preferred against the lad, it got bruited about that Nello had been seen in the mill yard after dark on some unspoken errand, and that he bore Baas Cogeze a grudge for forbidding his intercourse with little Alois; and so the hamlet, which followed the sayings of its richest landowner servilely, and whose families all hoped to secure the riches of

Alois in some future time for their sons, took the hint to give grave looks and cold words to old Jehan Daas' grandson.

No one said anything to him openly, but all the village agreed together to humor the miller's prejudice, and at the cottages and farms where Nello and Patrasche called every morning for the milk for Antwerp, downcast glances and brief phrases replaced to them the broad smiles and cheerful greetings to which they had been always used. No one 10 really credited the miller's absurd suspicion, nor the outrageous accusations born of them, but the people were all very poor and very ignorant, and the one rich man of the place had pronounced against him. Nello, in his innocence and his friendlessness, had 15 no strength to stem the popular tide.

"Thou art very cruel to the lad," the miller's wife dared to say, weeping, to her lord. "Sure he is an innocent lad and a faithful, and would never dream of any such wickedness, however sore his 20 heart might be."

But Baas Cogeze, being an obstinate man, having once said a thing, held to it doggedly, though in his innermost soul he knew well the injustice that he was committing.

25

Meanwhile, Nello endured the injury done against him with a certain proud patience that disdained to complain: he only gave way a little when

he was quite alone with Patrasche. Besides, he thought, "If my picture should win! They will be sorry then, perhaps."

Still, to a boy not quite sixteen, and who had dwelt in one little world all his short life, and in his childhood had been caressed and applauded on all sides, it was a hard trial to have the whole of that little world turn against him for naught. Especially hard in that bleak, snow-bound, famine-stricken winter-time, when the only light and warmth there could be found abode beside the village hearths and in the kindly greetings of neighbors. In the winter time all drew near to each other, all to all, except to Nello and Patrasche, with whom none now would have anything to do, and who were left to fare as they might with the old paralyzed, bedridden man in the little cabin, whose fire was often cold, and whose board was often without bread, for there was a buyer from Antwerp who had taken to drive his mule in of a day for the milk of the various dairies, and there were only three or four of the people who had refused his terms of purchase and remained faithful to the little green cart. So that the burden which Patrasche drew had become very light, and the centime pieces in Nello's pouch had become, alas! very small likewise.

25. Centime pieces. French copper coins worth less than one-fifth of a cent.

The dog would stop, as usual, at all the familiar gates, which were now closed to him, and look up at them with wistful, mute appeal; and it cost the neighbors a pang to shut their doors and their hearts, and let Patrasche draw his cart on again, 5 empty. Nevertheless, they did it, for they desired to please Baas Cogeze.

Noël drew close at hand.

The weather was very wild and cold. The snow was six feet deep, and the ice was firm enough to 10 bear oxen and men upon it everywhere. At this season the little village was always gay and cheerful. At the poorest dwelling there were possets and cakes, joking and dancing. The merry Flemish bells jingled everywhere on the horses; every- 15 where within doors some well-filled soup pot sang and smoked over the stove; and everywhere over the snow without laughing maidens pattered in bright kerchiefs and stout kirtles, going to and from the Mass. Only in the little hut it was very 20 dark and very cold.

Nello and Patrasche were left utterly alone, for one night, in the week before the Christmas Day, Death entered there, and took away from life forever old Jehan Daas, who had never known of life 25 aught save its poverty and its pains. He had long

13. Possets. Drinks made of hot milk curdled with wine.

19. Kirtles. Skirts.

been half dead, incapable of any movement except a feeble gesture, and powerless for anything beyond a gentle word; and yet his loss fell on them both with a great horror in it: they mourned him passionately. He had passed away from them in his sleep, and when in the gray dawn they learned their bereavement, unutterable solitude and desolation seemed to close around them. He had long been only a poor, feeble, paralyzed old man, who could not raise a hand in their defense, but he had loved them well: his smile had always welcomed their return. They mourned for him unceasingly, refusing to be comforted, as in the white winter day they followed the deal shell that held his body to the nameless grave by the little church. They were his only mourners, these two whom he had left friendless upon earth—the young boy and the old dog.

“Surely, he will relent now and let the poor lad come hither?” thought the miller’s wife, glancing at her husband where he smoked by the hearth.

Baas Cogez knew her thought, but he hardened his heart, and would not unbar his door as the little, humble funeral went by. “The boy is a beggar,” he said to himself: “he shall not be about Alois.”

The woman dared not say anything aloud, but when the grave was closed and the mourners had

gone, she put a wreath of immortelles into Alois' hands and bade her go and lay it reverently on the dark unmarked mound where the snow was displaced.

Nello and Patrasche went home with broken 5 hearts. But even of that poor, melancholy, cheerless home they were denied the consolation. There was a month's rental overdue for the little place, and when Nello had paid the last sad service to the dead he had not a coin left. He went and 10 begged grace of the owner of the hut, a cobbler who went every Sunday night to drink his pint of wine and smoke with Baas Cogez. The cobbler would grant no mercy. He was a harsh, miserly man, and loved money. He claimed in default of 15 his rent every stick and stone, every pot and pan, in the hut, and bade Nello and Patrasche to be out of it on the morrow.

Now, the cabin was lowly enough, and in some sense miserable enough, and yet their hearts clove 20 to it with a great affection. They had been so happy there, and in the summer, with its clambering vine and its flowering beans, it was so pretty and bright in the midst of the sun-lighted fields! Their life in it had been full of labor and privation, 25

1. Immortelles. Flowers which retain their form and color a long time and so are put on graves as emblems of immortality.

15. In default of. Owing to lack of.

and yet they had been so well content, so gay of heart, running together to meet the old man's never-failing smile of welcome!

All night long the boy and the dog sat by the
5 fireless hearth in the darkness, drawn close together for warmth and sorrow. Their bodies were insensible to the cold, but their hearts seemed frozen in them.

When the morning broke over the white chill
10 earth it was the morning of Christmas Eve. With a shudder, Nello clasped close to him his only friend, while his tears fell hot and fast on the dog's frank forehead. "Let us go, Patrasche—dear, dear Patrasche," he murmured. "We will not
15 wait to be kicked out: let us go."

Patrasche had no will but his, and they went sadly, side by side, out from the little home which was so dear to them, and in which every humble, homely thing was to them precious and beloved.
20 Patrasche drooped his head wearily as he passed by his own green cart: it was no longer his—it had to go with the rest in the dues of debt, and his brass harness lay idle and glittering on the snow. The dog could have lain down beside it and died for
25 very heartsickness as he went, but whilst the lad lived and needed him Patrasche would not yield and give way.

They took the old accustomed road into Ant-

werp. The day was yet scarce more than dawned, most of the shutters were still closed, but some of the villagers were about. They took no notice whilst the dog and the boy passed by them. At one door Nello paused and looked wistfully within: 5 his grandfather had done many a kindly turn in neighbor's service to the people who dwelt there.

"Would you give Patrasche a crust?" he said timidly. "He is old, and he has had nothing since last forenoon." 10

The woman shut the door hastily, murmuring some vague saying that wheat and rye were very dear that season. The boy and the dog went on again wearily: they asked no more.

By slow and painful ways they reached Antwerp 15 as the chimes tolled ten.

"If I had anything about me I could sell to get him bread!" thought Nello, but he had nothing except the wisp of linen and serge that covered him, and his pair of wooden shoes. 20

Patrasche understood, and nestled his nose into the lad's hand, as though to pray him not to be disquieted for any woe or want of his.

The winner of the drawing prize was to be proclaimed at noon, and to the public building where 25 he had left his treasure Nello made his way. On the steps and in the entrance hall there was a crowd

of youths—some of his age, some older, all with parents or relatives or friends. His heart was sick with fear as he went amongst them, holding Patrasche close to him. The great bells of the city
5 clashed out the hour of noon with brazen clamor. The doors of the inner hall were opened; the eager, panting throng rushed in: it was known that the selected picture would be raised above the rest upon a wooden dais.

10 A mist obscured Nello's sight, his head swam, his limbs almost failed him. When his vision cleared he saw the drawing raised on high: it was not his own! A slow sonorous voice was proclaiming aloud that victory had been adjudged to
15 Stephan Kiesslinger, born in the burgh of Antwerp, son of a wharfinger in that town.

When Nello recovered his consciousness he was lying on the stones without, and Patrasche was trying with every art he knew to call him back to
20 life. In the distance a throng of the youths of Antwerp were shouting around their successful comrade, and escorting him with acclamations to his home upon the quay.

The boy staggered to his feet and drew the dog
25 into his embrace. "It is all over, dear Patrasche," he murmured—"all over!"

9. Dais. Platform.

16. Wharfinger. Wharf owner.

He rallied himself as best he could, for he was weak from fasting, and retraced his steps to the village. Patrasche paced by his side with his head drooping and his old strong limbs feeble under him from hunger and sorrow.

5

The snow was falling fast: a keen hurricane blew from the north: it was bitter as death on the plains. It took them long to traverse the familiar path, and the bells were sounding four of the clock as they approached the hamlet. Suddenly Patrasche paused, arrested by a scent in the snow, scratched, whined, and drew out with his teeth a small case of brown leather. He held it up to Nello in the darkness. Where they were there stood a little Calvary, and a lamp burned dully under the cross: the boy mechanically turned the bag to the light: on it was the name of Baas Cogez, and within it were notes for six thousand francs.

The sight roused the lad a little from his stupor. He thrust it in his shirt, and stroked Patrasche and drew him onward. The dog looked up wistfully in his face.

Nello made straight for the mill-house, and went to the house door and struck on its panels. The miller's wife opened it weeping, with little Alois clinging close to her skirts.

"Is it thee, thou poor lad?" she asked kindly through her tears. "Get thee gone ere the Baas

see thee. We are in sore trouble to-night. He is out seeking for a power of money that he has let fall riding homeward, and in this snow he never will find it; and God knows it will go nigh to ruin 5 us. It is Heaven's own judgment for the things we have done to thee."

Nello put the note-case in her hand and signed Patrasche within the house.

"Patrasche found the money to-night," he said 10 quickly. "Tell Baas Cogeze so: I think he will not deny the dog shelter and food in his old age. Keep him from pursuing me, and I pray of you to be good to him."

Ere either woman or dog knew what he did, he 15 had stooped and kissed Patrasche: then had closed the door hurriedly on him, and had disappeared in the gloom of the fast-falling night.

The woman and the child stood speechless with joy and fear: Patrasche vainly spent the fury of his 20 anguish against the iron-bound oak of the barred house door. They did not dare unbar the door and let him forth: they tried all that they knew how to solace him. They brought him sweet cakes and juicy meats; they tempted him with the best they 25 had; they tried to lure him to abide by the warmth of the hearth; but it was of no avail. Patrasche

2. A power of money. Much money.

4. Go nigh to ruin us. Almost ruin us.

refused to be comforted or to stir from the barred portal.

It was six at night when, from an opposite entrance, the miller at last came, jaded and broken, into his wife's presence. "It is lost forever," he 5 said, with an ashen cheek and a quiver in his stern voice. "We have looked with lanterns everywhere: it is gone—the little maiden's portion and all!"

His wife put the money into his hold, and told 10 him how it had come back to her. The strong man sank trembling into a seat and covered his face with his hands, ashamed and almost afraid.

"I have been cruel to the lad," he muttered at length: "I deserved not to have good at his hands." 15

Little Alois, taking courage, crept close to her father and nestled against him her curly fair head.

"Nello may come here again, father?" she whispered. "He may come to-morrow as he used to do?" 20

The miller pressed her in his arms: his hard sun-burned face was very pale and his mouth trembled. "Surely, surely," he answered his child. "He shall bide here on Christmas Day, and any other day he will. In my greed I sinned, and the Lord 25 chastened me gently: God helping me, I will make amends to the boy—I will make amends."

Little Alois kissed him in gratitude and joy,

then slid from his knees and ran to where the dog kept watch by the door.

“And to-night I may feast Patrasche?” she cried in a child’s thoughtless glee.

5 Her father bent his head gravely: “Ay, ay; let the dog have the best”; for the stern old man was moved and shaken to his heart’s depths.

It was Christmas Eve, and the mill-house was filled with oak logs and squares of turf, with cream
10 and honey, with meat and bread, and the rafters were hung with wreaths of evergreen, and the Calvary and the cuckoo clock looked out from a red mass of holly. There were little paper lanterns, too, for Alois, and toys of various fashions, and
15 sweetmeats in bright-pictured papers. There were light and warmth and abundance everywhere, and in it the child would fain have made the dog a guest honored and feasted.

But Patrasche would neither lie in the warmth
20 nor share in the cheer. Famished he was and very cold, but without Nello he would partake neither of comfort nor food. Against all temptation he was proof, and close against the door he leaned always, watching only for a means of escape.

25 “He wants the lad,” said Baas Coge. “Good dog! good dog! I will go over to the lad the first thing at day-dawn.”

For no one but Patrasche knew that Nello had

left the hut, and no one but Patrasche divined that Nello had left him there, to face starvation and misery alone.

The mill kitchen was very warm; great logs crackled and flamed on the hearth; neighbors came 5 in for a glass of wine and a slice of the fat goose baking for supper. Alois, gleeful and sure of her playmate back on the morrow, bounded and sang, and tossed back her yellow hair. Baas Coge, in the fullness of his heart, smiled on her through 10 moistened eyes, and spoke of the way in which he would befriend her favorite companion; the house-mother sat with calm contented face at the spinning-wheel; the cuckoo in the clock chirped mirthful hours. Amidst it all Patrasche was bidden 15 with a thousand words of welcome to tarry there a cherished guest, and he would not. Neither peace nor plenty could allure him where Nello was not.

When the supper smoked on the board, and the voices were loudest and gladdest, Patrasche, watch- 20 ing always an occasion, glided out when the door was unlatched by a careless newcomer, and as swiftly as his weak and tired limbs would bear him sped over the snow in the bitter, black night. He had only one thought—to follow Nello. He re- 25 membered a bygone time, when an old man and a little child had found him sick unto death in the wayside ditch.

Snow had fallen freshly all the evening long; it was now nearly ten; the trail of the boy's footsteps was almost obliterated. It took Patrasche long and arduous labor to discover any scent by
5 which to guide him in pursuit. When at last he found it, it was lost again quickly, and lost and recovered, and again lost and again recovered, a hundred times, and more.

The night was very wild. The lamps under the
10 wayside crosses were blown out; the roads were sheets of ice; the impenetrable darkness hid every trace of habitations; there was no living thing abroad. All the cattle were housed, and in all the huts and homesteads men and women rejoiced and
15 feasted. There was only Patrasche out in the cruel cold—old and famished and full of pain, but with the strength and the patience of a great love to sustain him in his search.

The trail of Nello's steps, faint and obscure as
20 it was under the new snow, went straightly along the accustomed tracks into Antwerp. It was past midnight when Patrasche traced it over the boundaries of the town and into the narrow, tortuous, gloomy streets. It was all quite dark in the town.
25 Now and then some light gleamed ruddily through the crevices of house shutters, or some group went homeward with lanterns, chanting drinking songs,

The streets were all white with ice: the high walls and the roofs loomed black against them. There was scarce a sound save the riot of the winds down the passages as they tossed the creaking signs and shook the tall lamp irons.

5

So many passers-by had trodden through and through the snow, so many divers paths had crossed and recrossed each other, that the dog had a hard task to retain any hold on the track he followed. But he kept on his way, though the cold pierced 10 him to the bone, and the jagged ice cut his feet, and the hunger in his body gnawed like a rat's teeth. But he kept on his way—a poor gaunt, shivering, drooping thing in the frozen darkness, that no one pitied as he went—and by long patience traced the 15 steps he loved into the very heart of the burgh and up to the steps of the great cathedral.

The portals of the cathedral were unclosed after the midnight Mass. Some heedlessness in the custodians, too eager to go home and feast or sleep, 20 or too drowsy to know whether they turned the keys aright, had left one of the doors unlocked. By that accident the footfalls Patrasche sought had passed through into the building, leaving the white marks of snow upon the dark stone floor. By that 25 slender white thread, frozen as it fell, he was guided through the intense silence, through the immensity of the vaulted space—guided straight to the gates

of the chancel, and stretched there upon the stones, he found Nello. He crept up noiselessly, and touched the face of the boy. "Didst thou dream that I should be faithless and forsake thee? I—a
5 dog?" said that mute caress.

The lad raised himself with a low cry and clasped him close.

"Let us lie down and die together," he murmured. "Men have no need of us, and we are all
10 alone."

In answer, Patrasche crept closer yet, and laid his head upon the young boy's breast. The great tears stood in his brown sad eyes: not for himself—for himself he was happy.

15 They lay close together in the piercing cold. The blasts that blew over the Flemish dykes from the northern seas were like waves of ice, which froze every living thing they touched. The interior of the immense vault of stone in which they
20 were was even more bitterly chill than the snow-covered plains without. Now and then a bat moved in the shadows—now and then a gleam of light came to the ranks of carven figures. Under the Rubens they lay together, quite still, and
25 soothed almost into a dreaming slumber by the numbing narcotic of the cold. Together they dreamed of the old glad days when they had chased

each other through the flowering grasses of the summer meadows, or sat hidden in the tall bulrushes by the water's side, watching the boats go seaward in the sun.

No anger had ever separated them; no cloud had 5 ever come between them; no roughness on the one side, no faithlessness on the other, had ever obscured their perfect love and trust. All through their short lives they had done their duty as it had come to them, and had been happy in the mere 10 sense of living, and had begrudged nothing to any man or beast, and had been quite content because quite innocent. And in the faintness of famine and of the frozen blood that stole dully and slowly through their veins, it was of the days they had 15 spent together that they dreamed, lying there in the long watches of the night of Noël.

Suddenly through the darkness a great white radiance streamed through the vastness of the aisles; the moon, that was at her height, had broken 20 through the clouds; the snow had ceased to fall; the light reflected from the snow without was clear as the light of dawn. It fell through the arches full upon the two pictures above, from which the boy on his entrance had flung back the veil: the 25 "Elevation" and the "Descent from the Cross" were for one instant visible as by day.

Nello rose to his feet and stretched his arms to

them: the tears of a passionate ecstasy glistened on the paleness of his face.

“I have seen them at last!” he cried aloud.

“O God, it is enough!”

5 His limbs failed under him, and he sank upon his knees, still gazing upward at the majesty that he adored. For a few brief moments the light illumined the divine visions that had been denied to him so long—light, clear, and sweet, and
10 strong as though it streamed from the throne of Heaven.

Then suddenly it passed away: once more a great darkness covered the face of Christ.

The arms of the boy drew close again the body
15 of the dog.

“We shall see His face—*there*,” he murmured; “and He will not part us, I think; He will have mercy.”

IV

ON the morrow, by the chancel of the cathedral,
20 the people of Antwerp found them both. They were both dead: the cold of the night had frozen into stillness alike the young life and the old. When the Christmas morning broke and the priests came to the temple, they saw them lying
25 thus on the stones together. Above, the veils were drawn back from the great visions of Rubens, and

the fresh rays of the sunrise touched the thorn-crowned head of the God.

As the day grew on there came an old, hard-featured man, who wept as women weep.

“I was cruel to the lad,” he muttered, “and now 5
I would have made amends—yea, to the half of
my substance—and he should have been to me as
a son.”

There came also, as the day grew apace, a painter
who had fame in the world, and who was liberal of 10
hand and of spirit.

“I seek one who should have had the prize yes-
terday had worth won,” he said to the people,—
“a boy of rare promise and genius. An old wood-
cutter on a fallen tree at eventide—that was all his 15
theme. But there was greatness for the future in
it. I would fain find him, and take him with me
and teach him art.”

And a little child with curling fair hair, sobbing
bitterly as she clung to her father's arm, cried 20
aloud, “Oh, Nello, come! We have all ready for
thee. The Christ-child's hands are full of gifts,
and the old piper will play for us; and the mother
says thou shalt stay by the hearth and burn nuts
with us all the Noël week long—yes, even to the 25

25. The Feast of the Kings. Epiphany, a festival celebrated the twelfth day after Christmas to commemorate the manifestation of Christ by the star which guided the three kings to Bethlehem.

Feast of the Kings! And Patrasche will be so happy! Oh, Nello, wake and come!”

But the young pale face, turned upward to the light of the great Rubens with a smile upon its
5 mouth, answered them all, “It is too late.”

For the sweet, sonorous bells went ringing through the frost, and the sunlight shone upon the plains of snow, and the populace trooped gay and glad through the streets, but Nello and Patrasche
10 no more asked charity at their hands. All they needed now Antwerp gave unbidden.

All their lives they had been together, and in their deaths they were not divided; for when they were found the arms of the boy were folded too
15 closely around the dog to be severed without violence, and the people of their little village, contrite and ashamed, implored a special grace for them, and, making them one grave, laid them to rest there side by side—forever.

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